

State of California
Business, Transportation & Housing Agency
Department of Transportation

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS
Notice of Preparation
10-Mer-152 16.0/25.0
Action Item

Prepared by:
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Acting Chief
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CTC Meeting: August 22-23, 2001

Agenda Item: 2.2a.

Original Signed By

MARK LEJA
Acting Chief Financial Officer
August 1, 2001

SUMMARY- NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
ROUTE 152 IN MERCED COUNTY

10-Mer-152

From post mile 16.0, west of the City of Los Banos to post mile 25.0, east of the city.

Proposed Action:

Construct a 4-lane freeway around the City of Los Banos.

Programming:

The project is programmed in the 2000 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for \$178.6 million (\$161.2 million capital funds and \$17.4 million support funds). The estimated cost of the project ranges from \$208.4 million to \$249.4 million (capital and support funds).

Alternatives Being Considered:

- Alternative 1: Southern Alignment- Freeway would parallel north of Copa De Ora Avenue.
- Alternative 2: Southern Alignment- Freeway would parallel south of Pioneer Road.
- Alternative 3: Northern Alignment- Freeway would cross Badger Flat Road and Main Canal, pass north of the Regional Ag Sports Complex, and then pass south between the Arroyo and San Luis Canals.
- No build Alternative.

Potential Significant Environmental Effects:

- Impacts to wetlands, and threatened and endangered species and habitat.
- Impacts to historic structures.
- Impacts to farmland.

Proposed Measures to Minimize Harm:

- Coordinate with US Fish and Wildlife Service and California Fish and Game on mitigation.
- Wetland replacement or credit against a mitigation bank.
- Coordinate with State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) on historic structure mitigation.

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

TO: California Transportation Commission FROM: California Department of Transportation
(Lead Agency)
2015 E. Shields, Suite 100
(Address)
Fresno, CA 93726

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Statement
[References: Division 13, Public Resources Code, Section 21080.4 (State);
40 C.F.R. 1501.7 and 1508.22 (Federal)]

This is to inform you that the California Department of Transportation in coordination with the Federal Highways Administration will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an EIR/EIS for the project described below. Your participation as a responsible/cooperating agency is requested in the preparation and review of this document.

The proposed project is located on State Route 152 in Merced County from Post Mile 16.0, west of the city of Los Banos, to Post Mile 25.0, east of the city. Caltrans proposes to build a 4-lane freeway around the City of Los Banos. Construction on State Route 152 Los Banos Freeway Bypass would improve the interregional traffic flow and reduce congestion in the City of Los Banos. The proposed project would create an uninterrupted 80-mile segment of State Route 152 which would have controlled or limited access from US 101 on the west to State Route 99 on the east.

Three alternatives are being studied in addition to the No Build Alternative. All build alternatives would begin at approximately Post Mile 16 and end at approximately Post Mile 25. The alternatives are described as follows:

- ◆ **Alternative 1** would follow a southeast direction and parallel north of Copa De Ora Avenue at 1,100 feet. Then the bypass would turn northeast, cross Ward Road and run along the eastern side of the San Luis Canal before rejoining the current State Route 152 further east.
- ◆ **Alternative 2** would cross Pioneer Road, turn eastward and parallel Pioneer Road at approximately 1,300 feet south. After crossing Ward Road, the bypass would turn northeast and follow the same alignment as Alternative 1.
- ◆ **Alternative 3** also begins at the same point as Alternatives 1 and 2 but curves in a northeast direction to the west of Los Banos Creek. It would continue to State Route 165, south of Henry Miller Road and north of the regional Park Ag Sports Complex. The alignment would turn in a southeastern direction and lie between the San Luis Canal and the Santa Fe Grade.
- ◆ **Alternative 4** is the No Build Alternative.

Probable environmental concerns include: impacts to wetlands and sensitive species, changes in agricultural land use, aesthetic/visual resource impacts, construction impacts to businesses and residents, changes in traffic circulation patterns, impacts to cultural resources, increased noise levels, air and water quality, hazardous waste issues, and community impacts.

We need to know the applicable permit and environmental review requirements of your agency and the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR/EIS prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice. Please send your response and direct any comments or questions regarding this project to Vickie Traxler at the address shown above, or telephone at 559-243-8244. We will need the name for a contact person in your agency.

Date: July 16, 2001

Signature: _____

Peter Jemerigbe
Project Manager

State Route 152 Los Banos Bypass

